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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

(Release on receipt)

SUBJECT: "Easter Lilies"-Information from plant scientist, U.S. Department
of Agriculture

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You may not have been aware of it....but Easter lilies didn't bloom in their usual profusion in this country during the war years. Like those other wartime shortages--natural rubber, quinine and silk --Easter lily bulbs were short because we were dependent on the Far East for them.

Before the war....American florists imported between 25 and 30 million Easter lily bulbs each year. Most of these came from Japan. Before that--we used to get the bulbs from Bermuda but virus diseases destroyed the bulb industry in Bermuda.

Growers in this country had not tried to raise lily bulbs on a large scale. For one thing...florists could import the bulbs cheaply. For another...there seemed no way to control the virus diseases that attacked the bulbs.

However--when war made it impossible for florists to import bulbs.. growers here made a start. And thanks to plant scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture they have made some headway in the control of virus diseases.

They have found that there are two really harmful diseases--rosette and fleck. Both are virus diseases. And both are carried from infected bulbs to healthy bulbs by tiny plant aphids or plant lice.

The disease can be controlled by "roguing". That comes from the old saying "Throw the rogues out". To the Easter lily bulb grower it means "Destroy the diseased bulbs". That's the only way to protect the healthy ones.

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Growers in many parts of the country are raising the bulbs. The biggest plantings are in the Pacific Northwest--California, Oregon and Washington... and in the Gulf states--Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Florida. Some bulbs are also grown in Maryland and on Long Island.

Florists can force the bulbs under glass to bloom any time of the year. The potted lily is likely to be of the Croft variety. The taller cut lilies are the Creole.

There's prospect that the war-born industry in Easter lily bulbs will expand. This year's supply--grown in 1945--is between three and four million bulbs. Next year's crop--now being planted--is larger. So the prospect is that next year's supply of Easter lilies will be the largest on record for growers in the United States.

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